UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS MCALLEN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,) CASE NO: 7:20-CR-00240
Plaintiff,) CRIMINAL
vs.) McAllen, Texas
DANIEL SEPULVEDA,) Thursday, September 3, 2020
Defendant.) (11:14 a.m. to 11:44 a.m.)

REARRAIGNMENT

BEFORE THE HONORABLE RANDY CRANE, UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

APPEARANCES: SEE PAGE 2

Court Recorder [ECRO]: Rick Rodriguez

Transcribed By: Exceptional Reporting Services, Inc.

P.O. Box 8365

Corpus Christi, Texas 78468

361 949-2988

Proceedings recorded by electronic sound recording; transcript produced by transcription service.

APPEARANCES FOR:

For Plaintiff: PATRICIA PROFIT, ESQ.

Assistant United States Attorney

1701 W. Business Hwy. 83

Suite 600

McAllen, TX 78501

For Defendant: DANIEL A. SANCHEZ, ESQ.

501 E. Tyler

Harlingen, TX 78550

U.S. Probation: Esmeralda Ramirez

1701 W. Business Hwy. 83

Suite 729

McAllen, Texas 78501

1 the representation that your lawyer has given to you in this 2 case? 3

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

2.3

24

25

All right. I find that you've taken THE COURT: advantage of your right of assistance of Counsel.

I'm now going to ask the lawyer for the Government to read each of these counts that's pending against you.

When she finishes reading each one, you're going to be asked whether you plead guilty or not guilty to it. So please listen carefully.

MS. PROFIT: In the United States District Court, Southern District of Texas, McAllen Division; United States of America versus Daniel Sepulveda; Criminal Number M:20-cr-240-1.

Superseding indictment; the Grand Jury charges:

"On or about January 17, 2019, in the Southern District of Texas, and within the jurisdiction of the Court, Defendants Daniel Sepulveda, Evaristo Sepulveda, III, Juan Indalecio Garcia, Jose Luis Garcia, and Rene Sepulveda did knowingly and intentionally conspire and agree together and, with

other persons known and unknown to the Grand Jury, to possess with intent to distribute a controlled

substance.

"The controlled substance involved was five kilograms or more of a mixture of a substances containing a

It would not be your burden to have to prove that

25

innocent.

I will simply enter a judgment of guilty and sentence

- 1 | you on the basis of your plea of guilty.
- 2 You understand this; there will be no trial in your
- 3 | case?
- 4 THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.
- 5 **THE COURT:** Let's see. In your case, you understand
- 6 | that I could send you to prison for up to life, with a minimum
- 7 | sentence of at least ten years, and, in addition, I could fine
- 8 | you up to two million dollars?
- 9 THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.
- 10 **THE COURT:** So that's on the drug -- are they both
- 11 drug counts, Ms. Profit?
- I want to make sure I get --
- MS. PROFIT: Yes, they're both drug counts; the
- 14 | conspiracy and the substance counts.
- 15 **THE COURT:** Okay. So that's the punishment for each
- 16 | count.
- 17 And so, in addition to this imprisonment and fine
- 18 | that you face, I'm also required to impose upon you a
- 19 | supervised release term. And this is a term of supervision
- 20 | that starts as soon as you get out of prison. So it's in
- 21 addition to any imprisonment.
- 22 In your case, the Probation Office could actually
- 23 | supervise you for the remainder of your life.
- 24 You understand this?
- 25 **THE DEFENDANT:** Yes, sir.

```
1
              THE COURT:
                         And I'm also required to impose upon you
 2
    a $100 special assessment for each count. So, for you, that
    would be $200 in special assessments.
 3
              You understand this?
 4
 5
              THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.
              THE COURT: And have you spoken to your lawyer about
 6
 7
    these sentencing commission guidelines and how these sentencing
 8
    guidelines might apply in your case?
 9
              THE DEFENDANT: No, we hadn't discussed that.
10
              THE COURT: You've been gone -- maybe he didn't show
11
    you this chart that I have.
12
              But he talked to you about how many points you might
13
    score at, what your offense level might be for a certain amount
14
    of drugs; those kinds of things?
15
              THE DEFENDANT:
                              Yes.
16
              THE COURT: Okay. So that's what the guidelines are.
17
              And so your lawyer nor I know exactly where you're
18
    going to come out of these guidelines until after the Probation
19
    Office prepares the Presentence Report about you.
20
              You understand this?
21
              THE DEFENDANT:
                              Yes, sir.
22
              THE COURT: And then, once the Probation Office does
23
    prepare this report and determines exactly which of these
24
    sentencing ranges does apply in your case, I may, nevertheless,
25
    vary or depart from these guidelines, either up or down, and
```

- 1 you would not be able to take back your guilty plea.
- You understand this about the advisory non-binding nature of these guidelines?
- 4 THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.
- 5 **THE COURT:** Has anybody guaranteed to you or promised 9 you the sentence I'm going to give you in your case?
- 7 THE DEFENDANT: No, sir.

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

- 8 **THE COURT:** So this offense is a felony offense -- or 9 these offenses.
 - If I accept your guilty pleas, then you're going to be adjudged guilty of felony offense, which may have some additional consequences to you. Because you're going to lose certain rights.
 - You're going to lose the right to ever possess a firearm or ammunition; you'll lose the right to vote or serve on juries; you'll lose the right to certain Government licenses and benefits; and if you're not a citizen of this country, then you would lose your right to be here or to come here, and you'd be deported back to your own country.
- You understand these additional consequences?
- 21 **THE DEFENDANT:** Yes, sir.
- THE COURT: All right. And so I've been advised
 there's no plea agreement in this case. So given now all these
 rights that I've discussed with you here this morning,
- 25 Mr. Sepulveda, would you like to change your mind, and take

1 back any of your quilty pleas?

4

6

7

8

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

22

23

24

25

2 THE DEFENDANT: No, sir.

had advanced forward to a trial.

- All right. Then I'm now going to 3 THE COURT: No. ask the lawyer for the Government to describe for me the facts 5 in your case that the Government was prepared to prove if you
 - It's important to listen carefully. Because when she finishes describing all these events about you, I'm going to ask you if what she said was correct or not.
- 10 All right, Ms. Profit?
 - MS. PROFIT: On or about January 17, 2019, Defendant Daniel Sepulveda entered into an agreement with Evaristo Sepulveda, Juan Indalecio Garcia, Jose Luis Garcia, and Rene Sepulveda to possess with intent to distribute cocaine.
 - In furtherance of this agreement, at the direction of Jose Luis Garcia, Daniel Sepulveda traveled to the Rio Grande River with Juan Indalecio Garcia, Evaristo Sepulveda, Luis Sepulveda, and Rene Sepulveda to pick up a load of cocaine that was being imported into the United States from Mexico.
- 20 In furtherance of this agreement, Daniel Sepulveda 21 picked up 320 kilograms of cocaine from the river.
 - As he approached (indisc.) of Garcia's property, he was spotted by the United States Border Patrol, and fled back to the river, and crashed into the river. He then fled into Mexico.

```
1
              With respect to Count Two, he possessed with intent
 2
    to distribute 320 kilograms of cocaine in the ATV -- his ATV
    with the intent to distribute to other individuals.
 3
 4
              THE COURT: Mr. Sepulveda, were these facts stated by
 5
    the United States Attorney all true and correct?
              THE DEFENDANT: Not all of it, but some of it though.
 6
 7
              THE COURT: Well --
              THE DEFENDANT: (Indisc.).
 8
 9
              THE COURT: Okay. What is it that you would clarify
10
    or disagree with?
11
              THE DEFENDANT: Yeah. I was there with my brother
12
    that agreed. It was (indisc.).
              MS. PROFIT: I'm sorry, your Honor. I can't hear
13
14
    him.
15
              THE COURT: Yeah. I had trouble hearing you also,
16
    Mr. Sepulveda. If you could --
17
              THE DEFENDANT: That I agree, by myself, that I did
18
           I run for the (indisc.).
19
              THE COURT: All right. So you're the one that agreed
20
    to turn around and go into the river?
21
              THE DEFENDANT: Yeah.
22
              THE COURT: But the others were in agreement, though,
23
    to help load and haul the drugs as well, correct?
24
              I mean, this was more than just you; this was part of
25
    a conspiracy, correct?
```

```
1
              THE DEFENDANT: It was (indisc.) all me.
 2
              THE COURT: But so the Garcias and your brother, were
    they aware that there were drugs that were being distributed
 3
    here?
 4
 5
              THE DEFENDANT: I just talked to my lawyer who
 6
    (indisc.).
 7
              THE COURT: All right. I mean, because you pled a
 8
    conspiracy. And there has to be at least two people to be a
 9
    conspiracy.
10
              So you had to agree with somebody else to do this.
11
              THE DEFENDANT: My brother (indisc.).
12
              THE COURT: If you would like to talk to your lawyer,
13
    we can arrange for you to have a private conversation.
14
              Would you like to talk to your lawyer privately right
15
    now?
16
              THE DEFENDANT: Yes.
17
              THE COURT: Okay. So then --
18
              MS. PROFIT: Your Honor, the Government's fear is
19
    that we believe he is being set up to take responsibility for
20
    everyone else.
21
              And we would have not accepted the plea under --
22
    under these circumstances.
2.3
              THE COURT: All right.
24
              MS. PROFIT: (Indisc.).
25
              THE COURT:
                           Well, let him talk to his lawyer.
```

```
1
              And I know -- I presume you-all agreed to this
 2
    factual basis -- or at least you provided it earlier.
              So, Mr. Sanchez, I'm going to give you -- I'm going
 3
    to have you and your client placed in a breakout room, so that
 4
 5
    nobody else can hear, so that you-all can discuss this factual
 6
    basis.
 7
              MR. SANCHEZ: Yes, your Honor.
              THE COURT: All right. So, Ms. Rodriguez, if you
 8
 9
    could take care of that for us.
10
              THE CLERK: Sure, Judge.
         (Court in Recess)
11
              THE COURT: All right. I'm showing that Brooks is
12
13
    still on mute.
14
              There we go. All right.
15
              So we're back on the record in 20-cr-240; U.S.A.
16
    versus Dan Sepulveda. We had a recess where Sepulveda and his
17
    attorney were able to speak privately. So now we're back on
18
    the record.
19
              Again, we were trying to clarify the factual basis
20
    for this plea. Probably the -- I don't know.
21
              Mr. Sanchez, is there something you want to clarify?
22
    Or I could have Ms. Profit just read it again?
23
              MR. SANCHEZ: Judge, if I may. I spoke to my client.
24
    And he completed the possession. Because he says that's a true
25
    fact.
```

```
The conspiracy, he says it's not true. So he doesn't want to plead guilty to the conspiracy.
```

So I'm kind of -- I'm in a quandary here. If the Government won't let him plea to one, and not on the other -- I mean, I think the punishment is the same for both.

THE COURT: I mean, it is the same. But it's hard to believe this quantity didn't involve another person that he was getting it from or that he was going to deliver it to.

MR. SANCHEZ: All right. But the people named, I don't believe he feels are properly implicated -- if I can say that. So --

THE COURT: Ms. Profit, you're on mute.

MS. PROFIT: Your Honor, then he's going to have to go to trial on the conspiracy.

We're not going to accept the plea. We believe that -- that there are strings being pulled in the background to get him to accept -- the only responsibility where there are other family members that are very heavily involved.

 $\label{eq:weakly} \text{We have evidence to that extent.} \quad \text{And that has been}$ my position from the very first.

If he wants to -- if he (indisc.) the plea to the possession, that's fine. But the Government is going to proceed forward in trying him on the conspiracy count.

THE COURT: So, Mr. Sanchez, are you okay with that?

I mean, there's no plea agreement. So he can plea to

- one substantive count. But unless they've agreed to dismiss
- 2 | the remaining charge, they can still proceed with them.
- 3 MR. SANCHEZ: I understand, Judge. I've explained
- 4 | that to my client. And I guess he wants to go to trial on the
- 5 conspiracy.
- 6 THE COURT: Okay. Is that correct, Mr. Sepulveda? I
- 7 know you've been listening to us.
- 8 THE DEFENDANT: Yes, sir.
- 9 THE COURT: All right. So just to make sure we have
- 10 | the factual basis correct -- what you admit to.
- So you admit that you possessed these drugs with the
- 12 | intent to distribute them?
- 13 **THE DEFENDANT:** Yes, sir.
- 14 THE COURT: All right. And you knew it was illegal
- 15 | to possess these drugs?
- 16 **THE DEFENDANT:** Yes, sir.
- 17 **THE COURT:** All right. Then it's the finding of the
- 18 | Court in this case this Defendant is competent and capable of
- 19 | entering an informed plea.
- 20 He understands the nature of the charge against him,
- 21 | the consequences of his plea of true, the maximum punishment he
- 22 | faces, and that this plea of true -- I'm sorry -- this plea of
- 23 quilty.
- It's a knowing and voluntary plea supported by facts
- 25 | that contain the elements of the offense.

```
1
              I therefore accept his plea of quilty. He is
 2
    adjudged guilty of the offense.
              All right. So, normally, I would order a Presentence
 3
    Report at this time. But because you're going to proceed to
 4
 5
    trial on the other, I don't know that that's the best thing to
 6
    do.
 7
              We'd have sort of a partial Presentence Report.
                                                                Ι'm
 8
    just not sure what probation --
 9
              Ms. Ramirez, are you here from Probation?
10
              THE PROBATION OFFICER: Yes, your Honor.
11
              THE COURT: What does Probation prefer?
12
              I mean, you-all want to do a Presentence Report
13
    already, even though other charges still remain pending, or
14
    just wait and do this all at one time at the end?
15
              THE PROBATION OFFICER: Your Honor, I've never
16
    encountered this situation.
17
              If I could get -- I know there's a supervisor in the
18
    building. If I could get maybe two minutes and check.
19
              We can still write -- my understanding is, we can
20
    still write the PSR on what he pled quilty to.
21
              THE COURT:
                         Sure.
22
              THE PROBATION OFFICER: And that's it.
23
              And then if that is -- I can double-check. I think I
24
    would want to double-check to make sure with the supervisor.
25
              THE COURT:
                          All right.
                                      Well, let me do this:
```

- going to go ahead and have this order for a Presentence Report
 issued. I can always vacate it later.
- 3 **THE PROBATION OFFICER:** Okay.

7

8

16

17

18

19

- THE COURT: So I'm going to, anyway, have the order issued. It's already prepared.
 - Basically, it will require the Presentence Report be completed by the 13th of October; any objections by the 27th, which is two weeks later; and then a final report two weeks after that, or November 10th.
- And then Mr. Sepulveda will be set for sentencing on this one count, for November 17th, at 9:00 a.m.
- So I'm going to put him back on the docket with the
 others who asked to be reset for next month. We're not having
 jury trials this month because the Coronavirus pandemic. So
 I'll move him to next month.
 - We are trying to get everything put together with all of our protective equipment and stuff in the courtrooms to actually start trials next month. But some of that equipment is on back order.
- I don't know if it's going to be here. So just FYI.

 It may be October; but it most likely will not be.
- But that's our goal is to start back up next week -23 next month.
- There are others in the queue that are older than this. So probably the older cases are going to go first --

- 1 just for planning purposes.
- 2 All right. That concludes this hearing. There being
- 3 | nothing further, everybody's excused at this time.
- 4 Thank you you-all for attending.
- 5 MR. SANCHEZ: Judge?
- 6 THE COURT: Uh-huh?
- 7 MR. SANCHEZ: May I make a request?
- 8 THE COURT: Sure.
- 9 MR. SANCHEZ: My client is being housed in Brooks
- 10 | County. There's a co-Defendant in La Villa.
- 11 Counsel for them are farther from them, and I'm
- 12 | farther from mine. And I don't know if maybe they should be
- 13 | swapped. That way -- but every time I need to go see him, it's
- 14 | an hour-and-a-half drive there and an hour-and-a-half drive
- 15 back.
- 16 And it's kind of the same of the others. And Brooks
- 17 | County's closer for them to visit their clients, and La Villa
- 18 | will be closer for me.
- 19 I don't know if the Court could entertain and
- 20 | consider maybe ordering a swap.
- MS. PROFIT: Your Honor, we have serious problems
- 22 | with respect to all of the Defendants in this case.
- As you know -- I mean, can tell, from one of the
- 24 | charges in this indictment, they were so bold as to shoot the
- 25 | cameras -- the Border Patrol cameras out.

1 We've also founds lists of people. And we believe 2 that they may well have been involved -- that this organization involves in disappearing people from Mexico. 3 So we have considerable concerns as to where each of 4 5 these individuals are housed, based on the nature of this 6 particular conspiracy. 7 THE COURT: And you said there was somebody at La 8 Villa. His Counsel is from where; Corpus or San Antonio or --9 MR. SANCHEZ: They're from Rio Grande City, your 10 Honor. And so it's closer from Rio Grande City to Brooks 11 County, then to La Villa. And it's closer for me to La Villa 12 and Brooks County. 13 I mean, it's just -- I mean, you're housing them, and 14 the Marshals are housing them. It's not the Government housing 15 them with the Marshals -- for the Court. 16 And so all I'm asking is, can you just swap those, so that it's closer for both Counsel to visit their clients? 17 18 THE COURT: So I'll visit with them. But I will also 19 tell you that there's been no prisoner movement because of the 20 quarantine situations. 21 So even though I've, like, sentenced people, and 22 they're ready to go to BOP, there's no movement. Because they 23 don't want to accidently send somebody to another institution

who might be infected and spread it there.

24

25

```
1
    And so I know any movement would at least require a lockdown.
 2
              So let me talk to the Marshals. But I will just tell
 3
    you, they're reluctant to move anybody at this time because of
 4
    the virus.
 5
              MR. SANCHEZ: I understand, your Honor. I was --
 6
              THE COURT: Sure.
 7
              MR. SANCHEZ: -- making the request.
 8
              THE COURT: All right. I'll pass that along.
 9
              All right. Thank you very much for attending.
    Everybody's excused at this time.
10
11
              MS. PROFIT:
                            Thank you, your Honor.
12
              MR. SANCHEZ: Thank you.
13
         (Proceedings Concluded)
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
```

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript from the electronic sound recording of the proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

Join I Judson

October 14, 2020

Signed

Dated

TONI HUDSON, TRANSCRIBER